MONTGOMERY COUNTY EXECUTIVE'S
TRANSIT TASK FORCE

Preliminary System Design and Attributes for an Innovative Rapid Transit System

August 17, 2011

At its July 13, 2011 meeting, the Montgomery County Executive's Transit Task Force reviewed a proposed Memorandum and considered an oral presentation made by the Chair of Work Group "A" (System Design and Attributes). The Memorandum and oral presentation, which represented the overwhelming consensus of the Work Group "A" members, described the preferred set of designs and qualities of a unique County-wide Rapid Transit System featuring sleek and stylish Rapid Transit Vehicles ("RTVs"). The Transit Task Force at large offered certain comments and suggestions to the Memorandum to reflect the clear consensus of the entire Transit Task Force.

On July 22, 2011, the Chair of Work Group "A" circulated a revised Memorandum, which addressed those comments and suggestions made by the full Task Force at the July 13, 2011 meeting.

Although Work Group "A" used as a point of reference ITDP's "Gold Standard" scoring system of attributes, as set forth in ITDP's May 2011 report entitled "Recapturing Global Leadership in … Rapid Transit," Work Group "A" chose not to adhere strictly to ITDP's specific priority ranking. Instead, Work Group "A" formulated its own classification system to establish priorities among various potential attributes, as follows:

(1) Absolutely Essential (Grade AAA);
(2) Essential (Grade A);
(3) Highly Preferable, but not Essential (Grade B);
(4) Preferable (Grade C);
(5) Desirable (Grade D).

At the Transit Task Force's meeting held on August 17, 2011, the Transit Task Force adopted the preliminary classification system formulated by Work Group "A" and, after further consideration and deliberation, adopted the recommendations of Work Group "A" as more fully set forth below.

The Transit Task Force adopted the preliminary recommendation of Work Group "A" to classify the following characteristic as an absolutely essential attribute with a **Grade AAA priority**:

1. *To the maximum extent possible, having physically separated, dedicated RTV lanes THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE SYSTEM, so the system's RTVs would not become comingled into mixed general traffic.*

The Transit Task Force adopted the preliminary recommendation of Work Group "A" to classify the following characteristic also as an absolutely essential attribute with a **Grade AAA priority**:

2. *Developing a "World Class" Branding (with distinctive physical attributes), developing a targeted Public Education Campaign (with a compelling case for making the public investment required to create an innovative "World Class" County-wide Rapid Transit System), and developing a strategic Marketing Campaign to best assure maximum ridership potential (which, in turn, maximizes the proposed system's financial viability).*

With respect to specific attributes referenced in ITDP's "Gold Standard" scoring system, the Transit Task Force adopted the preliminary recommendation of Work Group "A" to classify the following characteristics as **Grade "A"** Essential Attributes:

(a) RTVs must be sleek and stylish.
(b) RTVs must have multiple wide doors on both sides of the RTVs.
(c) RTVs must be equipped with WiFi capabilities and electronic real-time messaging.

(d) Stations must all be of a consistent and distinctive style.
(e) Stations must provide off-vehicle fare collection.
(f) Stations must have level platform boarding.
(g) Stations must be safe, wide, and weather-protected.
(h) Stations must be equipped with real time data and with user-friendly maps.

(i) Peak-peak period frequency of 3-5 minute headways.
(j) Peak period frequency of 5-7 minute headways
(k) Lanes with intersection improvements and coordination with other modes of transportation.
(l) Multi-modal integration (pedestrians, bicycles, Zipcars®, taxi service, Ride-On and Metrobus, shuttle buses and neighborhood circulators).

The Transit Task Force adopted the preliminary recommendation of Work Group "A" to classify the following attributes as **Grade "B"** Highly Desirable, but not necessarily essential:

(a) Stations are set back from the intersection.
(b) Stations have physically separated passing lanes for limited express and local service.
(c) RTV lanes in central verge of road (where appropriate).
(d) Operate late nights and on weekends with no more than 15 minute headways.

The Transit Task Force adopted the preliminary recommendation of Work Group "A" to classify the following attributes as **Grade "C"** Preferable, but not necessarily Highly Desirable:

(a) Right-of-way enforcement (e.g., photo capture of violators)
(b) Peak period and peak-peak period pricing
(c) Single stations serving both directions (where appropriate)
(d) Bicycle lanes in corridor (but NOT within the RTV dedicated lanes)

The following attributes are included in ITDP "Gold Standard" chart, but are already presumed in Montgomery County's proposed system:

(a) Multiple routes using same RTV lanes
(b) Part of planned system
(c) Performance based contracting
(d) Operational controls to reduce RTV bunching

NOTE: Although there was an overwhelming consensus on the general priority of these attributes, naturally, when the time comes that some sacrifices may actually have to be made to reduce total costs, there may need to be a more targeted evaluation and decision on priorities within each Grade classification, and even within each specific attribute. For example, the most desirable RTV (which we classify as a "Grade A" priority) might cost $1.8MM each; but a less desirable RTV might cost $1.5MM each. In that event, we might suggest reallocating that $300K/RTV differential in cost toward a lower grade attribute, such as setting stations back from more intersections (even though the latter attribute is classified as a "Grade B").

The Transit Task Force adopted the preliminary recommendations of Work Group "A" to consider the following specific amenities with the following preferred attributes:

1. Stations should have some seating, but limited, and made of easy-to-clean solid materials that are shaped to discourage sleeping on those seating areas.

2. Stations should have a prominent, artistic tower that can be seen from a far distance (as a way finder) with the System's distinctive logo on top, station name, and directional guide.

3. Because of the diversity of area characteristics around proposed stations, the actual station names might likely be a blend of different approaches:
   a. Some may be named for the known landmark (e.g., NIH/Medical Center)
   b. Some may be named for the surrounding community (e.g., Garrett Park)
   c. Some may be named for street intersections (e.g., 355 & Gude Dr.)

4. Stations might be equipped with solar-powered heating elements and air cooling areas.

5. Security cameras at Stations feeding to central command and "blue light" emergency calling (probably to central command and not necessarily 911).

6. Trash receptacles should be placed near boarding platforms.

The foregoing priorities of system designs and attributes were derived from the following preliminary set of fundamental principles recommended by Work Group "A" and adopted by the Transit Task Force:

a. The Transit Task Force does not want the prospective rapid transit system to be so compromised by cost-cutting measures that it would fall far short of the desired "World Class" standards, and in turn, risk being an extraordinarily expensive system with only limited real value.

b. The Transit Task Force expressly acknowledges that cost of the system is indeed a vitally important factor, and we thus will not ignore cost in our deliberations. Nevertheless, if we do not seek to elevate the system design to the highest level possible, at least initially --- with a recognition that perhaps we might have to make some compromises to make the system more financially viable --- then we risk ending up with a significantly less effective system, which would not maximize the system's potential cost-effectiveness.

c. The Transit Task Force seeks to develop a system with such reliability and with such high standards of quality, that it will transform people's behavior on their transportation mode of choice. Today, the estimated peak period transportation distribution is ~15% transit, ~75% single-occupancy vehicles ("SOV"), and ~10% carpool/other. Given the physical constraints that preclude us from continuing to build more roads to accommodate more vehicle trips in the region, the most effective way to build transportation capacity to move more people will likely have to depend primarily on decreasing the peak period SOV trips and increasing the non-SOV peak period trips. Studies have indicated that travel speeds improve with relatively modest reductions in SOV trips during peak periods, and those speeds continue to improve at a significant and geometric progression as peak period SOV trips are further reduced. [As evidence of this phenomenon, we should all think of our more pleasant commuting experiences during "August in Washington"!] But if the County wishes to have transportation capacity to accommodate future desired growth, then relatively modest reductions in today's volume of SOV trips will be inadequate. The County must, therefore, create a rapid transit system that not only reduces today's volume of peak period SOV trips; but also, reduces the peak period SOV trips associated with the County's future growth. The most effective way to achieve these ambitious goals is to transform attitudes toward transit with the highest quality product and service. The County must, therefore, reach the riders who have a choice (as was done ~40 years ago with Metrorail). Making only slight, incremental change to increase ridership among those with little or no choice of transportation mode will not likely accomplish our desired goals. Moreover, we must remain mindful of the overarching objective of this endeavor; namely, to improve our communities' quality-of-life characteristics.

d. The Transit Task Force seeks to build a system of such a high quality that neighborhoods might actually compete to have their neighborhood selected for the earliest phases of the system, rather than having neighborhoods fighting to keep the system away from them. If the system were designed with such a high quality that it became desirable by neighborhoods, then the public might become even greater "invested" in seeing the system succeed.

e. First impressions are the lasting ones. It is thus vitally important that when the County Executive first rolls out to the public the plans for this rapid transit system, it must have been carefully branded and ready to be marketed as an exciting quality-of-life amenity. In that way, there is at least a chance the public will be more receptive to engaging in an intellectually-honest public discussion on the merits of such a system (and maintain an open mind toward the bold investments and sacrifices the public must be prepared to make for the success of the system now and for future generations).

f. The Transit Task Force encourages thinking regionally, not only geographically (i.e., other jurisdictions ultimately becoming integrated into one regional, standardized system); but also, in terms of future chronology. Specifically, experts estimate that the Washington Metropolitan Region will grow by ~1.3 Million people over the next 20 years. We do not wish for Montgomery County to shut down its tax base and growth potential. We wish for

Montgomery County to continue grow its job opportunities, its tax base, and thrive. We thus need to create the transportation capacity to accommodate job opportunities and a growing tax base for the next 20 years, the next half-century, and beyond.

Attached to this document are a variety of photographs that are representative of many of the system designs and attributes preferred and recommended by Work Group "A" and adopted by the Transit Task Force.

These Preliminary Recommendations relating to the System Design and Attributes were adopted by the Transit Task Force by a vote of 11 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 abstaining.

The following Task Force Members were in attendance:

Mark Winston, Chair
Thomas Street
Art Holmes
Craig Simoneau
Marilyn Balcombe
Jonathan Genn
David Hauck
David McDonough
Henry Montes
Francine Waters
Dan Wilhelm

The following Task Force Members were absent:

Roger Berliner
Nat Bottigheimer
Francoise Carrier/Casey Anderson
Marc Elrich
Lisa Fadden
Rich Parsons
Tina Slater
Darrell Mobley

Rob Garagiola, *ex officio*
Brian Feldman, *ex officio*
Steve Silverman, *ex officio*
Designee of Rep, Van Hollen, *ex officio*